

THE EXAMINER.

"PROVE ALL THINGS; HOLD FAST THAT WHICH IS GOOD."

VOLUME II.

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PAUL SEYMOUR,

Proprietor.

From the Louisville Democrat.

The Emancipation Movement Once More.

Gentlemen, my absence from home, and

particular engagements both before and

since, have detained me thus long from

your columns. Perhaps I should neither

regret the circumstance, nor offer an apolo-

gy for it; for it has been intimated to me

that I was drawing a little too free upon

your politeness in continuing this discussion

so long. I observed that my last communi-

cation did not appear in your daily sheet

two weeks after I had handed it to you,

and more recently I noticed your com-

plaint against the editors of the Examiner,

in which you say—"Mr. Breckinridge's ar-

ticles are paraded in the Examiner, headed

'From the Louisville Democrat,' but our

replies do not appear. We give both sides,

they only their own. They may indeed re-

ply that they did not consider our remarks

worth publishing. We could return the

compliment as to articles on emancipation

generally. We don't consider them worth

the space they occupy; but we have allow-

ed the emancipationists the benefit of their

own appreciation of their articles, and pub-

lished them for what they are worth. We

should print very little from our opponents,

I had first to determine that it was

worth printing."

I confess, gentlemen, that when I read

these lines, and found myself unable to re-

call anything in your paper on the emanci-

pation side, since this question was stirred

up by my own pen, it began to look

very much as if I had worn my welcome

out. But, the privilege of writing in such

a paper as yours being altogether too great

to be given up lightly, I turned back to the

beginning of the piece and read over again,

what you had said about me and my writ-

ings there—so complimentary that modesty

forbids me to repeat it—and then I consid-

ered that you surely will not hold me ac-

countable for the conduct of the Examiner,

and then I concluded that you did not mean

anything. But, gentlemen, if you are real-

ly getting tired of this discussion, please

say so in the vernacular, and I will quietly

retire—like one John Brown of whom I

used to hear when I was a boy, who, being

ordered out of doors, significantly remark-

ed, that he could take a hint as well as

anybody.

My last communication, I endeavored

to illustrate the tendency and influence of

slavery in regarding the population of a

country. You seem to consider my picture

drawn, but I do not understand you as

denying its substantial accuracy. Indeed

you could not deny it—so numerous and

so striking are the facts which establish it.

I was curious to see how you would meet

the argument derived from it. I knew very

well, as I intimated, that the common an-

swer has become a denial of the benefits of

a large population; but I had hoped to hear

of gentlemen like yourselves something

more to the point. Sirs, do you think that

there are people enough in Kentucky, or

that it would be to our disadvantage to ad-

verse more rapidly than we are doing in

less white population? Would you like to

see Louisville as large as Cincinnati, and

Kentucky as populous as Ohio? Or have

you rather Daniel Boone's view of the sub-

ject, of whom it is related, that as the set-

tlements advanced upon him, he would com-

plain of the scarcity of game, the annoy-

ance of neighbors, and other evils of a

dense population? That scarcely left him

show room, until he could bear the mis-

eries of his condition no longer, and seizing

his rifle would move off alone beyond the

limits of civilization? Or perhaps you sym-

patize with those aristocratic gentlemen,

who, like the English lords and gentry, with

their vast estates, would keep their peo-

ment derived from it. What use is there in

blinding our minds to the truth, like the

child that shuts his eyes or covers up his

head in the thunder storm?

You have thought proper to pass by alto-

gether what I have urged touching the ef-

fluence of slavery upon the political strength and

influence of the State. Is our relative pow-

er in this confederacy a question of no im-

portance? The presence of our slaves dimin-

ishes our representation, and thus our power

and influence in the government. And this

diminution is twofold, or by a double pro-

cess. For, if we had never had any slaves

we would now have more white people than

we in fact have; and then our slaves are

not represented in the same ratio with white

people, and thus our share in the govern-

ment is diminished by two degrees both ways.

I suggested before, that those who desire ne-

more people, do not care for any greater

power in the government of the country.—

Good easy souls!

There is another aspect of this subject

far more important than any which we have

yet considered. This is what I will call

the moral view of slavery. There are va-

rious lights in which this part of the sub-

ject may be contemplated. It will be enough

for me to suggest some of them at this time.

Should this discussion be continued, they

may be examined more at length hereafter.

And now, gentlemen, to begin at the be-

ginning, is slavery right? I do not wish to

go into any hair-splitting metaphysical

questions. You know that I am a very

plain man. I take you to be plain men.

I suppose that those whom I address through-

out the great body of the people who

read what I write, whether in your paper,

or others into which it may be copied—are

also plain common-sense people, who take

straight-forward views of things. Now I

ask, is slavery right—as a thing between

man and man, in their private relations—or

as a public institution? It began in this

country with the slave trade. I need hardly

ask you whether that was right; for, I be-

lieve, nearly every civilized nation has de-

clared it piracy, and punishes it with death.

But slavery here among us in Kentucky—

does the common sense, does the sincere

feeling of the people say, the thing is right?

It was born and brought up, and have lived

nearly all my life in Kentucky, among slaves

and their masters; and my clear and deep

conviction is, that the great body of them

all are of one opinion on this subject—to

wit, that the system is wrong. And for

myself, I am just as clear, that herein they

are right. I do not say, nor do they, that

holding slaves is a thing of itself, neces-

sarily sinful, simply a violation of the divine

law. No good man who took that view

could continue to hold slaves. But they

say, and so do I, and I think you will too,

that the institution of slavery is founded on

bad principles, and brings out injurious ef-

fects. It exists among us in its least of-

ensive form; but what does it imply here?

It strips the slave, not during his childhood,

nor for his crimes, but without offence on

his part, and during his whole life, of all pow-

er over himself. His right to the avails of

his labor, his command of his time, his use

of himself, his control of his children, his

living with his wife, nay, his having a wife,

these things are all denied him as of right.

If he enjoys any of them, it is at the pleas-

ure of his master. The system reduces him

to the level of property—may there be less

of dignity and permanency in the tenure by

which he is held as property, than the earth

he treads on—for he is but a chattel. He

has not even left to him the right to acquire

knowledge, so that he may know how to

live and how to die. His soul itself is well

nigh at the mercy of his master. That this

power is generally used humanely, and

sometimes with more regard to the welfare

of the slave than to the profit of the master,

no man acquainted with the state of society

in Kentucky can deny. But is it not an

enormous power? Is it not a wrong struc-

ture of society that recognizes it? Is it not

a wrong to a portion of the human family

to subject them, needlessly and in perpet-

uity, to the exercise of such power? Is

not the thing so far wrong, that it ought to

be corrected? The abolitionists say that it

is universally and necessarily wicked—and

ought to be at once given up in every case,

irrespective of all consequences, and of

every consideration, except the absolute, in-

herent and essential criminality of the rela-

tion. In this, they are themselves essen-

tially wrong, and out of this, their radical

error, spring their injustice to their coun-

trymen, and their ill-judged and injur-

ious kindness to the slave, and thus, in some

instances, they have shown their spirit to be

a wild and heartless fanaticism.

But, gentlemen, slavery in Kentucky

implies something back of all this, in our

way of making people slaves. It does not

allow us to go to Africa and catch a man—

that's felony—but you may stand over a

woman, and the moment her child is born,

you may seize it, and put your mark upon

it, and call it yours—and the law says it is

yours, and shall be yours and your chil-

dren's. Now, sir, I believe that the great

mass of the people of Kentucky think that

the principle which is at the bottom of this

whole thing is wrong.

But there are many effects of it which go

to show that it is wrong—for you know, a

good tree does not produce bad fruit.—

Consider the influence of the system upon

the slaves themselves in a moral point of

view. They must, from the necessity of

the case, be an ignorant people. Many

negroes among us are intelligent for ne-

groes—but that is all you can say. Or if

you can point to examples of more than

the rule. Many of our slaves can read—

a few of them can write—but that is all.

Human masters will allow them, religious

ones will cause them to learn to read, but

that is all. And the great mass of our

300,000 don't know a letter in the book.

They are a people addicted to the vices

which are common among ignorant and

degraded people. Many of them are vir-

tuous—many of them are truly religious.

Some of the brightest examples of piety

are found among them. But the mass—I

have known enough of them all my life to

feel that their moral and religious condition

is sad indeed. Nor do I believe that it ever

will be otherwise, while they are slaves—

nor have I any confidence that it would be

better, if they were emancipated and left

among the white people. The world hears

but little of the particular instances of

virtue and piety among the colored peo-

ple, and that is not known abroad.

But suppose the instances of their virtue

and piety, of which the law takes cognizance

among the "white slaves" you spoke of in

the free States, were hunted out among

slaves in Kentucky, and publicly punished,

now do you think our black slaves would

compare, as to their morals, with your white

ones? And then their religious instruction.

There are numerous and extreme difficulties

about it, of which those who are not con-

versant with the matter know little; but

which are sufficient to show that slavery

is a miserable system in its moral rela-

tions and influence.

I might draw a picture of the effects of

slavery upon the master, and his family.

Which the more faithful it was, the less

available to the system would be its retri-

bution. Such pictures are often false,

and mere caricatures; but you know enough

of slavery, gentlemen, to understand per-

fectly that it exerts many evil influences

upon the temper, the feelings, the charac-

ter of the master. The truth is, the tree is

corrupt, and therefore it brings forth evil

fruit. I know it has been said, that slave

cultivates in the master an elevation of

mind, a high sense of honor, &c. So, it

has been said, does the aristocracy of the

old world. But do you believe it? It

would be very strange, indeed, if slavery

did not tend to develop in the master and

his children those sentiments so deep laid

in our depraved nature, which in their cul-

tivation make us lordly, errandable and

violent; and it is notorious, and you will

not think of denying it, that these things

belong more to Southern than to Northern

men. The finest specimens of courtesy and

elegant gentlemen are often found in the

masters of slaves; and

